

programs of the institutions. There was much testimony on this subject at my interim study hearing. The extended care rehabilitation program within the Lincoln Regional Center is an excellent example of what this bill would accomplish. A certified social worker is the program director for this nationally acclaimed program. I had a tour and a briefing of this program a year ago and there was no doubt about its success. The present model, the medical staff model, uses only psychiatric physicians as clinical directors. Very few of these medical doctors have the technical or rehabilitation background necessary to provide sole leadership for effective psychiatric rehabilitation. In addition, an interdisciplinary model frees the medically trained personnel to supervise other doctors and medical operations. It allows time for these doctors to see the patients which are the very reason that they are employed by the Department of Public Institutions. We realize that there's a different place for medical treatment for those suffering from severe, persistent and disabling mental illnesses. Consumers themselves would not argue with this statement. However, these medically trained doctors do not have to be utilized as costly administrators when there are others in the field who are better trained to do this aspect of mental health care. In a nutshell, Nebraska has a scarce resource in psychiatric doctors, and it's increasingly difficult to recruit and retrain them in Nebraska. Are you listening, Kate? Thank you. This change would allow nonphysician professionals, such as psychologists, social workers and nurses to also administer or co-administer programs in staffing in the regional centers, along with physicians while consulting with the medical staff. In conclusion, I'd like to say that I submit this bill as a result of the interim studies which indicate that Nebraska must implement the Medicaid rehabilitation option for more cost-effective community-based mental health services. Mental health professionals are very much aware that federal Medicaid policy is complex and it will be changing over the next few years. However, it is clear that immediate attention of the rehab option will give Nebraska a better position for responding to these changes than is currently the case. Nebraska brings up the rear in funding for mental health services.

PRESIDENT ROBAK: One minute.

SENATOR ROBAK: This bill would begin to pull us out of the dark ages and bring us into the twentieth century, hopefully before it's over. I'd be happy to answer any question and urge you to